

AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY APRIL 9, 2007

CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE—2007–08 REGULAR SESSION

Assembly Joint Resolution

No. 18

Introduced by Assembly Member Solorio

(Coauthors: Assembly Members Adams, Aghazarian, Arambula, Bass, Beall, Berg, Caballero, Charles Calderon, Carter, Coto, Davis, De La Torre, De Leon, DeSaulnier, Dymally, Eng, Feuer, Hancock, Hayashi, Hernandez, Horton, Jones, Karnette, Krekorian, Laird, Leno, Levine, Lieber, Ma, Mendoza, Mullin, Nakanishi, Nava, Nunez, Parra, Portantino, Price, Richardson, Ruskin, Saldana, Swanson, Tran, and Wolk)

February 23, 2007

Assembly Joint Resolution No. 18—Relative to naturalization.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL’S DIGEST

AJR 18, as amended, Solorio. Legal permanent residents: United States citizenship.

This bill would memorialize the Legislature’s opposition to a proposed increase in the fees for legal permanent residents to begin the naturalization process by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services and would call upon the President and the Congress to address the nation’s system of financing immigration services.

Fiscal committee: no.

- 1 WHEREAS, California is home to many hard-working,
- 2 taxpaying, legal permanent residents who are eager to become
- 3 full-fledged Americans by pursuing the dream of United States
- 4 citizenship; and

1 WHEREAS, On January 31, 2007, the United States Citizenship
2 and Immigration Services (USCIS) announced a proposal that
3 would raise the fees for starting the naturalization process from
4 \$400 to \$675, an increase of 69 percent; and

5 WHEREAS, The USCIS anticipates that the fee hike will go
6 into effect in June 2007; and

7 WHEREAS, Naturalization fees have been soaring since 1991,
8 when newcomers paid \$90 to apply for United States citizenship;
9 and

10 WHEREAS, Naturalization fee increases result from our nation's
11 system of financing immigration services, which requires the
12 USCIS to rely almost exclusively on application fees to fund the
13 delivery of services to immigrants; and

14 WHEREAS, The USCIS believes that it needs this massive fee
15 hike to pay for major infrastructure investments and process
16 enhancements, such as improvements in the timeliness of
17 background checks, modernization of its outdated business systems
18 through technology upgrades, facilities improvements, and
19 enhancements in its personnel training and recruitment programs;
20 and

21 WHEREAS, There are at least 2.3 million legal permanent
22 residents in California who are eligible to apply for United States
23 citizenship; and

24 WHEREAS, According to data from the 2000 census, about
25 one-third (36 percent) of California noncitizen households have
26 annual incomes that are less \$25,000; and

27 WHEREAS, The proposed fee increase would place a nearly
28 insurmountable barrier in the path of legal permanent residents
29 who seek to naturalize, many of whom have limited financial
30 resources; and

31 WHEREAS, We believe that our system for funding immigration
32 services should be a partnership between newcomers and the
33 federal government where applicants pay a reasonable fee for
34 quality service; and

35 WHEREAS, The proposed fee increase is contrary to the spirit
36 of our nation's and state's tradition of Welcoming and integrating
37 immigrants, and sends newcomers the wrong message at a time
38 when they are seeking to embrace United States citizenship; and

1 WHEREAS, Naturalization benefits California by helping to
2 ensure that newcomers become full participants in our nation's
3 civic life; and

4 WHEREAS, The full participation of newcomers enriches and
5 maintains the vitality of our democracy; now, therefore, be it

6 *Resolved by the Assembly and the Senate of the State of*
7 *California, jointly,* That the Legislature adamantly opposes the
8 proposed fee increase by USCIS and demands a halt on the fee
9 increase for all naturalization applications; and be it further

10 *Resolved,* That the Legislature calls on the Director of the USCIS
11 to immediately provide President George W. Bush and the
12 Congress with accurate information to ascertain the amount of
13 federal appropriations that would be needed to enable the USCIS
14 to modernize its operations, and enhance its naturalization services,
15 without raising the naturalization fee; and be it further

16 *Resolved,* That the Legislature calls on President George W.
17 Bush and the Congress to address the fundamental problems in
18 our nation's system for financing immigration services by
19 providing appropriations to supplement fee revenue to cover costs
20 of major USCIS expenses such as infrastructure investments,
21 process enhancements, and capital improvements; and be it further

22 *Resolved,* That the Chief Clerk of the Assembly transmit copies
23 of this resolution to the Director of the United States Citizenship
24 and Immigration Services, the President of the United States, the
25 Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the President pro
26 Tempore of the Senate for inclusion in the Congressional Record.